

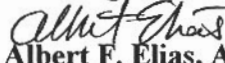


PLANNING COMMISSION

Department of Urban Planning & Design • P.O. Box 27210 • Tucson, AZ 85726-7210

DATE: March 2, 2005

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: 
Albert F. Elias, AICP, Executive Secretary

SUBJECT: Houghton Area Master Plan (HAMP)

Introduction: This is the third study session on the HAMP. Staff will make introductory remarks and provide a PowerPoint presentation on density and the Village Center model.

At the February 2, 2005 Study Session, the Commission requested the staff edit the HAMP document, complete the changes needed, and bring it back for an additional study session. The document has been edited significantly to clarify concepts, correct grammatical problems and reduce the amount of background and introductory language.

New language has been added to clarify the document and to address affordable housing. First, an Executive summary has been added. Next, affordable housing language has been added to page 17. This language has not been reviewed by the Citizens Review committee (CRC), as the CRC did not raise affordable housing as an issue. Staff has been exploring approaches to affordable housing with the Housing Commission, and this language is the result of that effort. Finally, the Implementation section has been clarified and has been made more definitive. The revised document is included as Attachment A.

Recommendation: Staff recommends the Planning Commission set two Public Hearing dates for the HAMP, on March 30, 2005 at Pima Community College East, and on April 6, 2005 at Tucson City Hall.

Issues Requiring Consideration

These three issues are of interest to three different constituencies. Staff believes the resolution of their concerns is beyond the scope of the HAMP. The issues are: the proposed Desert Village Parkway; the land use designation east of Mesquite Ranch; and, Fantasy Island. The Desert Village Parkway and the Mesquite Ranch concerns were addressed in the February 2, 2005 Study Session Communication. That communication is included as Attachment B for your review.

Desert Village Parkway

Property owners are concerned about the "alignment" of the parkway shown on the HAMP map. As explained in the February 2, 2005 Communication, and to the property owners, the line on the map is conceptual, representing a future transportation corridor. The corridor must be preserved as land sales and development proposals occur.

Identifying the corridor, conceptually, is appropriate at the area planning level. Establishing the future, ultimate alignment and ROW will be a significant, and separate, process. Topography, drainage and other site issues, safety, connections to existing roadways, and the need to acquire private property are some of the many issues to be addressed in the roadway development process.

To address the concerns of the property owners regarding the alignment of the Desert Village Parkway, staff has inserted the following language into the plan:

The alignments depicted for the future Desert Village Parkway, Melpomene Way, Rita Road and Harrison Road are conceptual. The ultimate alignments and rights-of-way for these future roads will be established under the Mayor and Council Roadway Development Policies, adopted April 6, 1998, as amended.

As a planning document, the HAMP cannot resolve this issue. Defining a specific alignment is a separate engineering-level process. The language assures the property owners that there will be a public process to establish the alignment and right-of-way (ROW) for the Desert Village Parkway. The adopted Roadway Development Policies require the formation of Citizen Advisory Committees for all projects that require an Alternative Alignment Report. This committee will provide guidance, review and evaluation of specific project proposals so that ample consideration is provided to those directly impacted by the project. The ultimate alignment is approved by the Mayor and Council after holding a public hearing on the recommendations. The property owners will be notified and invited to participate in the process.

Mesquite Ranch

Owners of lots along the east boundary of Mesquite Ranch are concerned about the medium density residential designation proposed east of their subdivision. Attachment C contains a series of communications between Mr. Randall Pierce, from Mesquite Ranch, and staff. In addition, letters to Chairperson Patrick, and his e-mail response have been included.

The property owners are concerned about habitat protection, privacy, safety, and view preservation. Their approach to addressing these issues is to recommend no development, designations of very low density residential development, or park site for the State Trust land to the east. These recommendations were set forth in the January 19, 2005 letter to the "HAMP Committee Members". They also recommended preservation of the wash between Mesquite Ranch and the Trust land.

Staff believes the proposed medium density residential land use is appropriate for this site for the following reasons. First the site is located along a major roadway, which will provide the appropriate level of access. Second, the site is in close proximity to the Town Center which will offer potential employment, entertainment and retail opportunities. Third, the Town Center will also contain a future regional transit facility which will offer connections and access to the entire City. Fourth, The State Land Department planning staff, and the Technical Advisory Team to the HAMP also concurred with the designation. And, fifth, this land use model is widely accepted and is used successfully in other parts of the community, and is the approach also taken south of the Town Center.

In addition to the land planning issues cited above, it should be noted that the HAMP recommendations are equivalent to the existing South Pantano Area Plan (SPAP), which covers this area, and which has been in effect since 1991, approximately nine years prior to Mesquite Ranch planning, development and sales. The SPAP identifies Poorman Road as a major street, and states that mid-urban (up to 15 RAC) to urban densities (greater than 15 RAC) are appropriate along major streets. The SPAP also places a priority on preserving existing neighborhoods, and the recommended approach is through clustering of new development away from existing non-compatible development.

The HAMP designation of medium density residential densities is consistent with the existing mid-urban to urban designations of the SPAP. The proposed PCD ordinance requires developers to design their development to be compatible with existing development. The PCD offers full flexibility for developers to address the Mesquite Ranch property owners' concerns. The HAMP/PCD process adds an additional level of protection for the property owners because the PCD will be an ordinance requiring compatibility, and not a policy.

Staff believes the HAMP land use designation is consistent with sound planning principles, and it does not represent a material change from the land use designation that has been in effect since 1991.

The Mesquite Ranch property owners are also concerned about privacy, safety and wash preservation. The wash running between Mesquite Ranch and the Trust land is proposed as an Environmental Resource Zone (ERZ). The ERZ prohibits activity with the 100 year floodplain without mitigation. The wash provides an initial buffer between the two developments. A trail is also proposed along the east side of the wash which will expand the buffer. This buffer also begins to address the privacy and safety concerns, as people will be on the trail on the far side of the wash from Mesquite Ranch. In addition, the trail will attract people which will limit the chance that the area will become a site for loitering. The presence of people will improve the level of security.

When the Trust land is proposed for development the neighbors' concerns regarding views will be addressed. Neither the Arizona State Land Department, nor another owner can be expected to pay to maintain the existing views, through underdevelopment of the site. They will, however, be expected to address view concerns in the design of the development.

In conclusion, the existing HAMP land use designation for the land east of Mesquite Ranch should remain medium density residential for the following reasons: (1) medium density residential development along a major street, near services, employment and transit is an accepted planning model; (2) medium density residential is the equivalent of the existing designation in the SPAP, which was in place when the homeowners purchased their homes; (3) the ERZ designation for the wash and the trail along the east side of the wash create an initial buffer to future development; (4) the PCD will require the future developer to design the development to be compatible with existing development, and it offers the flexibility to do that; and, (5) the future developer will be required to meet with the Mesquite Ranch residents, prior to submitting a plan, and will have to address their concerns.

While staff believes the land use designation east of Mesquite Ranch is the appropriate designation, staff is concerned about compatibility issues between existing residential uses and

proposed higher intensity uses. This will occur in several areas of the HAMP. These situations are not remedied by reducing land use intensities. The reduction of land use intensities, to match existing developments, logically leads to only single family developments with no commercial services.

The appropriate approach is in design of future developments. The proposed Planned Community Development Zone mandates compatibility between new and existing development. However, to emphasize the need for design compatibility between new and existing uses, and to address this issue at the appropriate level in the HAMP, staff recommends the HAMP be revised to include the following language:

Proposed new development, which is of greater density, intensity, or scale, than the adjacent, existing development, should be made compatible with the existing development, through the use of design tools such as physical separation of structures, building heights, clustering, and buffering. Developers are required by the Planned Community Development Zone to use these and other tools to the greatest extent possible to achieve compatibility with existing development.

This language is most appropriately inserted into the document on page 19, as part of the discussion of the mix of uses in master planned communities.

Fantasy Island

Fantasy Island (FI) is a mountain bike trail that was built on StateTrust land without a permit. The major part of the trail covers approximately 385 acres. FI has become a nationally known mountain biking facility. There are several FI sites on the internet, and there is a vocal local contingent of FI supporters.

The State Land Department is not supportive of FI. Staff has been told that the State Land Department is not supportive of the continued existence of FI, even if an offer to purchase materialized. They do not believe such a facility is compatible with the future residential development envisioned for the area.

The cost of acquiring FI will be high. For example, assuming a per acre cost of \$20,000, the cost of acquisition would be approximately \$7.7 million. A foremost concern is that acquisition of FI would absorb all of the park land acquisition and development funds for the HAMP.

It is not certain that the State Land Department would agree to make FI available for acquisition. The FI site may be auctioned as part of the approximately 1400 acres of Trust land west of Houghton Road.

The FI issue is complex and sensitive. This matter may not be resolved in the HAMP process. It appears all of the interested parties will have to come together to attempt to achieve an acceptable solution. Because the FI represents only a small piece of the HAMP scope, staff does not believe adoption of the HAMP should be delayed until this issue is resolved. Staff, however, proposes the following language be inserted into the HAMP to identify and clarify issues surrounding FI.

Support in concept a mountain bike trail facility. Fantasy Island exists on StateTrust land and is not supported by the ASLD. To resolve the issue of the preservation of Fantasy Island the City of

Tucson, Pima County, the ASLD and the mountain biking community, should work cooperatively to answer the following questions:

- 1. Must Fantasy Island remain in the current location, or can a similar facility in an alternative location be supported?*
- 2. If relocation is supported what are recommended sites?*
- 3. If relocation is not supported, what size and configuration of Fantasy Island, at its current location can be supported by all parties?*
- 4. What funding mechanisms are available to acquire Fantasy Island, at its current location, or to acquire and rebuild the facility at a new location?*
- 5. What arrangement can be established to provide for the operation and maintenance of such a facility?*
- 6. What are the liability issues surrounding government ownership, management or maintenance of such a facility? Are these issues acceptable to the local governments?*
- 7. Should a non-profit entity be created by the mountain biking community to manage and maintain the facility, possibly, with funding from the City and/or Pima County?*

Summary

The HAMP document has been significantly revised and edited as requested by the Commission. While certain issues remain unresolved in the minds of those constituencies, staff believes they may not be resolved by the HAMP, and therefore, the HAMP is ready to be set for public hearing.

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Attachments: A - Revised HAMP document
B - HAMP Study Session Communication February 02, 2005
C - Communications with Mesquite Ranch Representative